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Surazska, Wieslawa

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## Theoretical Perspectives On Central Europe\*

WIESLAWA SURAŻSKA\*\*

Institute of Comparative Politics, University of Bergen

**Abstract:** Various theoretical perspectives on political developments in post-communist Central Europe are considered. The paradigms of the modernisation and democratic theories are found insufficient to explain such phenomena as the renewal of ethno-regional identities that are typical of the region and sometimes lead to irredentism and secession. It is argued that these phenomena can be better understood in the context of Rokkan's conceptions of state- and nation-building. Rokkan's theory on the critical junctures in history is tested on the return of the 1991 Polish parliamentary elections. The map of the turnout in this elections is produced, showing the lines of the Third Partition (1795-1919) in contemporary electoral behaviour. Other examples of the re-integration of historic regions are presented and the consequence of this development discussed.

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The first surge of the literature on post-communist transition concentrated on the nascent democratic institutions and developing markets. These are typical issues that democratic theory – wherein democracy is understood as a redistributive mechanism – addresses. From such a perspective it is easier to understand the way in which wealth is distributed and institutional constraints are challenged in the established democracies, with their defined boundaries, entrenched institutions, operating markets and social structures already in place. It seems less helpful, however, in approaching the processes of institution-building and the major, almost revolutionary, changes of societal structures.

Democratic theory does not address the issue of state-making and political integration as processes with their own dynamics nor can it handle the problem of territorial tensions generated by these processes. Such phenomena as irredentism and secession are beyond the grasp of the leading paradigms of social sciences and therefore are consigned to the sphere of irrational incidents or peculiarities of a “political culture”. This means that they are of no relevance to the mainstream models. Since territorial tensions are the leading phenomena of the post-communist world, to understand them we must go to Rokkan rather than to Dahl.

While studying the dynamics of political integration in West European societies, Stein Rokkan was convinced that the most persistent paradigm of social sciences on the diminishing significance of territorial boundaries within modern societies had already been “shaken to the core” [Rokkan and Urwin 1983: 117]. He understood what complex

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\*\*) Direct all correspondence to Wiesława Surażska, Senter for Samfunnsforskning, Professor Keyzers gate 2, 5007 Bergen, Norway. Telefon + (47) 55 58 97 10, telefax + (47) 55 58 97 11, e-mail wieslawa.surazska@isp.uib.no

entities the modern, developed societies were, with their several layers of identity, such as a city, a region, an ethnic group. The fact that those various layers “are historically derived” he wrote, “does not necessarily make them anachronistic, without relevance to the modern industrial world” [Ibid.: 119]. As early as the mid-seventies, Rokkan pointed to four countries as dubious cases of social integration: Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Italy and Belgium.

It seems, though, that Rokkan underestimated the resilience of early traditions in the social sciences. The real shock came only with the breakdown of communist regimes. These regimes were the testing grounds for the paradigm of modernisation. Such objectives as industrialisation, urbanisation, mass education and secularisation of society were the prime items on the agenda of communist governments and were implemented with lightning speed. How did those vehicles of modernity affect communist societies? The results seem somewhat different from those predicted by modernisation theory. The significance of territorial boundaries (ethnic, religious, historic, cultural) within post-communist societies has by no means decreased. On the contrary, since the corset of coercion was lifted, ethno-territorial lines of division have become more distinct than any other cleavages. The voting patterns in post-communist elections have hardly showed consistent functional cleavages at the national level [O’Loughlin et al. 1993].

At the same time, research on electoral returns in East-Central Europe has shown the increasing significance of territorial cleavages that can be traced back to the pre-war period. In the last Czechoslovak parliamentary elections of 1992, the only all-national party was that of the former Communists. The two winners, ODS and HZDS, drew their support from the Czech Lands and Slovakia respectively. Within the Czech lands themselves, the regions of Moravia and Silesia gave as much support to the local party (HSD-SMS) as to Václav Klaus’ victorious ODS. The same phenomenon occurred with the substantial Hungarian minority in the southern districts of Slovakia [Kostelecký 1992, Jehlička et al. 1993]. In Hungary, the pre-war cleavage between east and West of the Danube was still present in the electoral returns of 1990 [Martis et al. 1992]. In the first democratic elections to the Polish Sejm in 1989, the geography of electoral turnout recreated the century-long differences between the traditional regions of Galicja, Wielkopolska and the Congress Poland, the territorial entities that had ceased to exist more than 70 years before [Florczyk et al. 1990].

In this context, the first question to be considered is: how modern were communist societies? This question will be considered in the following section. In further sections, I shall try to show that Rokkan’s perspective might be more fruitful in research on post-communist transition than such leading paradigms of social sciences as democratic theory and modernisation theory.

#### **How modern were communist societies?**

In the special issue of *National Interest* on the “Strange Death of Soviet Communism”, Fukuyama reprimanded sovietologists for developing their own models and methods apart from the paradigms of modern social sciences [Fukuyama 1993]. Had they been more familiar with modernisation theory and the collateral models of political development, he wrote, the students of communist regimes would have a better chance of understanding what was happening in the Soviet Union. Such phenomena as the diffusion of power from the Soviet centre to the Party’s lower reaches, the growing significance of industrial managers and academics, even the growth of “mafias” inside and outside the

Party were all but typical facets of a “proto-civil society”. In this, Fukuyama says, the Soviet Union falls into the same category as other countries that have made the recent transition from an agricultural economy to a modern industrial one and have to cope with the vicissitudes of modernity.

It seems, however, that Fukuyama himself did not spend much time reviewing the output of Soviet studies over the last two decades. For since the mid-seventies, the mainstream of Western sovietology had been dwelling precisely on the current issues and paradigms of social sciences. Soviet politics was combed in order to find evidence of such phenomena as institutionalisation, managerialism, the formation of interest groups etc. [Almond and Roselle 1989]. The Western political scientists were often helped in their efforts by the modern-thinking section of the Soviet establishment, who considered it quite reassuring to find the ills typical of Western modernity inside the Soviet Union.

In fact, modernisation theory was effectively forcing out the theory of totalitarianism as the flagship model of the area.<sup>1</sup> Since the result was more rather than less confusion, one may think that perhaps the major paradigms of social sciences, at least those referred to by Fukuyama, have been wanting not less than the indigenous models produced by sovietologists themselves. Indeed, the opposite to Fukuyama’s argument can be made, namely that the post-war social sciences in general, and modernisation theory in particular, have neglected to their detriment the experience of communist societies.

Modernisation theory is a paradigm rather than a theory with an exact content. Indeed, the notion of a paradigm is too narrow for the idea which itself gave birth to the social sciences. Such disciplines as economics and sociology owe their existence to the intellectual discovery of changes taking place in Britain and France at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries [Binder 1971]. The idea of transition from a traditional to modern economy was soon turned into a powerful ideology with its own impact on both social sciences and political developments. In the classical version of the paradigm, the process of modernisation was either a by-product of actions undertaken by rational individuals (the invisible hand of classical economics) or was directed by transcendental forces (historical dialectics) beyond individual control. In both cases, the modernising outcome was not intended and politics was merely adapting to the economic and social changes. This was more or less the most commonly accepted explanation of the subsequent stages of Western European development from a traditional, rigidly stratified society to a more mobile, modern one with all the political consequences that followed.

Later on, the modernisation paradigm responded to the demand from belated modernisers in their quest for beneficial changes already achieved in Western Europe. Thus the subsequent models assumed that economic and social transition to modernity might be planned, directed and brought about by a government. Prescriptions for modernisation multiplied in the fifties and sixties, when the demand was particularly high in the post-colonial world and developmental models were put on the political agenda. Industrialisation was the prime item, not only for the sake of economic development but also in order

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<sup>1</sup>) It originated with Barrington Moore’s *Terror and Progress, USSR* [1954] and practically dominated the production of the field since the appearance of J. F. Triska and P. M. Cocks (eds.) *Political Development in Eastern Europe* [1977].

to facilitate social transition. The rise of the urban proletariat in the predominantly peasant societies was seen as a necessary social base for modern development.

The modernising function of Marxist regimes was taken for granted. After all, industrialisation, urbanisation, mass education and secularisation of society as well as other items of modernity were the prime issues on their agenda. Indeed, some authors saw the Leninist party as the only practical solution to the problems of belated modernisation. That democracy may become a hindrance rather than a precondition to late modernisation was already suggested by several theories of political development. In the sixties, Huntington summarised the experience of post-colonial development in the unequivocal alternative: "...the non-western countries of today can have political modernisation or they can have democratic pluralism, but they cannot normally have both" [Huntington 1968: 138].

A closer examination of the institutional landscape left behind by communist regimes should have given pause for thought to those who saw communist parties as the agents of modernity. Democratic governments in Eastern Europe were often prepared to use whatever structures of the former regime might be helpful in discharging their new responsibilities. They found few such structures. That came as a surprise. After all, the state apparatus left behind by communist regimes was considered fairly strong or even excessive. Thus, the general expectation was that once this all-powerful state machinery was made accountable to representative institutions, the main thrust of political transition would be accomplished.

It soon appeared, however, that the creation of representative institutions by means of popular elections was a relatively easier task than bringing the executive organs back into working shape. Indeed, the lack of modern administrative and economic institutions has been the major obstacle in the entire process of postcommunist transition. For example, it was easier to draw the laws on taxation and pass them through newly-elected parliaments than to set up a working system of tax collection. The rapid industrialisation and urbanisation was paralleled by the withdrawal from the money economy and its replacement with an economy in kind. As in the "war economy", when money is no object, the first result was a rapid increase in the material output of sectors chosen by the government. But the loss of capital efficiency and flexibility as well as shortages of all items not included among governmental priorities were unavoidable.

Indeed, as far as institutions go, the communist period resulted in "de-modernisation" in most of the countries concerned. Post-communist transition has largely consisted of the recovery of pre-communist financial and administrative institutions as the lost threads of modernisation. In the Czech Republic, the pre-war Katastral Offices were only reopened in January 1993 to keep a record of land holdings; now they must cope with the consequences of the former regime's practices of granting unrecorded and frequently informal property titles. In Poland, attempts have been made to restore the pre-war local lending and saving associations (KKO), so far without much success.

If the forces at work on both sides of the Iron Curtain were essentially similar or equivalent in their modernising impact, how such disparate results be explained? Unfortunately, modernisation scholarship appears quite impervious to empirical data. I have not seen a single attempt to test any of the numerous developmental models sprung from the theory of modernisation against the data freely available in the former communist coun-

tries. On the contrary, the same paradigm has been applied again and with renewed vigour, this time to explain the collapse of communist regimes.

The keyword has become “civil society”. The notion has had quite diverse antecedents in the history of ideas. In the tradition of the early Enlightenment, civil society is a form of government as opposed to the “state of nature”, whereas in the Hegelian tradition, the adversarial role of civil society to the government (state) is stressed. Most often applied in the modern social sciences, the deTocquevillian notion of civil society posits a network of voluntary organisations protecting individual interests against excessive interference by the state. The latter meaning, however, has more in common with the liberal tradition of natural law and civil rights than with the Hegelian apology of state. In any case, the idea that civil society might have existed in the legal vacuum of an arbitrary regime that denied not only civil rights but also private property would have struck both Hegel and de Tocqueville as absurd.

Nevertheless, the frequent use of the term “civil society” by East European dissidents gave it its own place in the history of ideas. In this new context, “civil society” was to become a remedy against the “totalitarian state”. The underlying creed was that no amount of state pressure was able to suppress social initiative for independent organisations and it was well-tuned to the sensibilities of Western observers, left, right and centre. The neo-conservatives found in the dissident idea of civil society an additional argument for cutting back on the expansion of the welfare state. The New Left or “unorthodox Marxists” found it stimulating in their search for alternatives to ordinary party politics and a capitalist state.

The latter meaning of civil society, as an alternative to “ordinary” liberal democracy, was particularly appealing to the taste for “anti-politics” typical of the dissident culture in Eastern Europe. For example, both Havel and Michnik were trying to prevent the split up of all-embracing revolutionary movements (Solidarity and Civic Forum) into regular political parties by arguing that party politics with its left-right division was already a thing of the past. Thus the proponents of “civil society” found themselves in opposition to the development of a pluralist society. But pluralism was unavoidable under the new circumstances. The only way of preventing it would have been to reverse the methods of the former regime.

There is a conspicuous adversity between the idea of modern society as presumed and practised by Marxist modernists on the one hand, and the empirical features of developed societies on the other. In the Marxist tradition, social development anticipated a simplification of societal structures including the elimination of the most persistent modern division into classes. Such an idea of social progress informed the policies of communist governments. Communist take-overs resulted in the destruction of the existing societal structures by means of wholesale nationalisation and terror. The uniform content of mass media further enhanced the appearances of social homogeneity. Empirical sociology has shown, however, that developed societies do not become simpler in their structures but rather more complex. Indeed, the more developed society, the more complex it becomes: “There will be more groups, more classes, more occupations, more structures, more roles – and more conflict” [Binder 1971]. The absence of a complete array of classes, statuses, social groupings etc. has been considered tantamount to the absence of civil society.

The point of contention is therefore whether modern social differentiation had in fact developed under communist regimes, despite their ideological commitment and political interest in preventing the expression of group interests. To be sure, neither could the pre-existing social differentiation be eliminated without a trace nor the most severe repression and indoctrination control or eradicate all economic transactions outside the official framework of redistribution. A shrewd observer of the Ukrainian culture described how the ever-present threat of Mongol invasions shaped the manners of local trade. Merchants displayed their goods in such a way as to be able to pack up their business at the blow of a whistle and disappear into the nearby bushes. The same manner of trading could be observed in the Ukraine under Soviet rule [Stempowski 1992].

Moreover, communist leaderships were in the business of government and that could not be done without a rudimentary organisation, delegation of powers, giving some groups better access to goods and privileges than others etc. [Kamiński 1992]. This in turn created a certain type of social stratification, various entrenched interests and countervailing centres to defend them. In particular, the late communist regime was incapable of effective control over its own territorial administrations. All the same, the defective centralisation did not, as some observers of Soviet politics had it, translate itself into pluralism.

The ability to stage a protest has been identified as the prime feature of modernity, as proof of the existence of civil society under communist regimes. However, the form in which communist societies protested was indicative of something to the contrary. The contagious quality of such discontent, if not immediately suppressed by force, derived from the lack of modern social divisions that might have counter-balanced each other's interests. In this sense, the ten-million strong Solidarity union emerging overnight and almost without warning cannot be an indication of the existence of civil society but rather of its conspicuous scarcity. Communist societies were not class societies, neither in the Marxist nor Weberian senses, both of which refer to market and property relations. Even in Poland, the country most often pointed to as the example of a civil society simmering under the pressure of the communist regime, more systematic research found that the only two structures attracting individual loyalties were "family" and "nation" with a vacuum in between, that is, in the space designated for the structures of civil society.

Western experience has demonstrated yet another and perhaps more important feature of civil society than staging a protest, namely its role in bringing about *political integration*. The dominant theme of sociological research and theory – from Tönnies and Weber to Rokkan and Lipset – concerned the changing social cleavages and commitments that pull individuals out of their primordial local-ethnic and kinship ties and integrate them into modern, nation-wide, interconnected networks of interests and structures [Lipset and Rokkan 1967: 1-63]. Rokkan's studies in particular demonstrated that the political integration of modern societies is based to a large extent on class and other functional cleavages cutting across the more traditional – religious, ethnic or regional – ones [Rokkan 1975: 368-440]. His theory received a peculiar confirmation *à rebours* after the collapse of communist regimes. As a result of the lack of modern, functional divisions, post-communist societies tend to crumble along ethno-territorial lines. The same dearth of vertical social structures has been pointed to as the major stumbling block to the development of mass political parties in the post-communist era [Staniszki 1991]. The phenomenon of communist leaderships swept from power by overwhelming majorities in the

first elections only to return with narrow pluralities in the next, is another indication of the want of modern cleavages that would facilitate the development of mass political parties capable of challenging the remnants of the former ruling elites and organisations.

### Central Europe from Rokkan's perspective

From the Rokkanian perspective, East-Central Europe is in the process of *territorial retrenchment*; a large territorial system has broken up and the former peripheries are consolidating around their own historic centres. There are many constraints caused by the historic legacies latent in the region. But there is also little doubt that Central Europe is undergoing the most significant turn in its history, a turn which itself will have important consequences for the future. As Rokkan noted: "In the history of the territorial structuring of political systems, it is as important to analyse the process of retrenchment as it is to study the phases of expansion" [Rokkan 1970: 77].

In such a perspective, post-communist transition means the acquisition of a new status by the former peripheries, a process by no means harmonious and wholly predictable. The split of Czechoslovakia has already shown that, under the new circumstances, there is nothing given in the maintenance of the central status by any particular site. To do so, the resources are necessarily, not only economic, but also political and cultural and the new democratic governments may find them in short supply. Thus, the new democratic regimes in East-Central Europe are being established in a contest of centripetal and centrifugal forces, with all the challenges to the latecomers.

The problem of timing seems crucial and has already been described in the context of the post-colonial state and nation building. Such problems as the consolidation of a political centre, effective administration of its policies and the maintenance of public order may appear almost intractable in societies embracing mass democracy without modern institutional safeguards already in place [Rokkan 1975]. Rokkan pointed out that the traditional western democracies had managed to solve the worst problems of state and nation building in sequence. His model consists of four phases: (1) Administrative penetration, (2) Cultural standardisation, (3) Participation, and (4) Redistribution. Thus, in the successful ventures of building a state, the administrative machinery was already in place before the demands of mass democracy emerged. The welfare state usually came last. In contrast, the newcomers must cope with all these tasks at one and the same time. Further, the new states have been confronted with highly successful development in the West which made the public even more demanding.

All these challenges of the belated state building have reappeared in Eastern Europe. The dynamics of post-communist reforms do, in a way, follow Rokkan's model, but in reverse. The post-communist governments must begin with the dismantling of the overloaded mechanisms of redistribution, on the way they lose popular support, which results in the political fragmentation of the electorate and the mobilisation of the periphery that has become increasingly resistant to administrative penetration from the centre.

There is, in fact, a marked gap between the aspirations of new democratic governments in East-Central Europe to maintain the unitary systems of public administration and their ability to do so. For while the process of *external* territorial retrenchment that gave the historic "failed centres" the second (or the third?) chance to reinstate their sovereignty, the same process has also activated the countervailing forces of *internal* retrenchment, that is, the movements for greater local and regional autonomy within a regime.



Such internal retrenchment has always been an important factor in democratic transitions and the post-communist transition is no exception. The main reason is general in nature. It results from the fact that the former regime collapsed and the new one is in the process of establishing itself. Thus some local elites, especially in regions with strong historic identities, are trying to renegotiate their position within the newly emerging regime. The process of internal retrenchment may also occur at the level of municipalities. Demands for revision of their administrative affiliation and boundaries are usually followed by the demand for greater decentralisation.

#### **The microcosm of civil society**

Local frays over administrative sites and boundaries have usually been perceived as primeval tribulations typical of backward communities and considered wholly irrational by many a political scientist and policy-maker. The latter's analytical predilections make them more preoccupied with the general features of a political process rather than with its content. Such an homogenising approach may leave significant political traumas not only unexplained but also unnoticed, until it is too late to come up with a remedy.

Local aspirations do not need to involve ethnic or religious differences although their presence makes the conflict more dramatic. For example, the Czech municipalities placed on the "wrong side" of the historic border of Moravia by the arbitrary division of 1960 showed some symptoms of a "frontier mentality" in their voting patterns in 1992 national elections [Jehlička et al. 1993]. During the Polish debate on reinstating the intermediary units of *powiat*, one of the criteria considered was the presence of land registers in the town. Neighbouring towns engaged in snatching those books from each other and citizen's committees were called up to guard them.

The issue of territorial boundaries remains at the heart of democratic process, even though democratic theory tends to discard it as marginal. The degree to which inhabitants accept the scope of a territorial unit as an appropriate entity of communal life or a distinct cultural space (i.e. a historic region) is irrelevant, since at the grassroots, the democratic process is expressed in the awakening of such primordial identities [Linz and Stepan 1992]. What is more, such collective identities may appear a precondition of successful democratic development. The importance of local "civic roots" has recently been demonstrated by Putnam in his study on civic traditions in modern Italy [Putnam 1993].

Putnam's "discovery" of great territorial differences in the performance of democratic institutions in Italy surprised nobody. The division between the North and the South of the country as well as the historical antecedents of this division were common knowledge. What is new in Putnam's approach is that he made use of this common knowledge in systematic political studies. Putnam draws his theoretical perspective from more general concepts of collective action, and makes no reference to Rokkan's studies in his book. Perhaps that is why Putnam's geo-political explanations of the circumstances that shaped particular types of communities are more anecdotal than systematic.

Rokkan's models are not easily applicable. The very preparation of a data base that would have met their empirical requirements may take more than the usual time and funds designated for a research project. Nevertheless, the effort of extending his conceptual map of Europe to the East, where it has some major gaps, seems worth taking. In the following section, some preliminary results of such a project will be presented. The research begins with an empirical investigation of the geo-political consequences of Po-

land's complex territorial history. In the following section some elements of the Rokkanian concept of nation-building find confirmation in the electoral returns in contemporary Poland.

### **The concept of critical junctures and the “freezing” hypothesis**

The European process of mass democratisation at the turn of the XIXth and XXth centuries developed within the framework of the already existing institutions of government. In Rokkan's models, both structures – that is, the existing machinery of government and the developing institutions of mass participation – are conceived together in his concept of *critical junctures* in nation building. There are four such junctures in the development of European nation states in Rokkan's model: (1) the Reformation-Counterreformation movements of the XVI-XVII centuries, (2) the national revolutions of the post-Napoleonic era, (3) the industrial revolution of the XIXth century, and (4) the international revolution of 1917 [see Rokkan 1983 for the latest version]. Each of those junctures created a typical set of cleavages and alliances depending on the circumstances under which they happened in particular countries [Rokkan 1970].

Without going into the details of the model which developed into a conceptual map of European democracies, the important point for further consideration is that the national responses to each critical juncture tend to “freeze” into quite persistent patterns of cleavages, often territorially defined and reflected in the contemporary party systems of particular countries. Rokkan's “freezing” hypothesis coincides with the position taken by Putnam on the persistence of patterns of civic engagement rooted in the history of various regions [Putnam 1993]. I shall test this theory of “freezing” of civic makeup as it emerged in the early stages of the national and industrial revolution on Polish electoral data. Poland is a good case to test such a theory since in the XIXth century – that is, at the time of the watersheds in European nation-building – the country was divided between three empires of diverse political cultures: Russia, Prussia and Austro-Hungary.

After the Partitions of 1773-95, the region of Wielkopolska became the eastern province of Prussia as the Great Duchy of Poznań and shared in the German modernisation and industrialisation drive of the mid-Nineteenth century. Now the region leads the process of economic transition. The southern part of Poland (Malopolska) went to the Habsburgs as the province of Galicja. The region was largely rural, dominated by a conflict between the peasants and landowners, skilfully manipulated by the imperial rulers. The Galician peasants were turned into Poles only under the Second Republic and the region has remained the stronghold of the peasant movement until now. Densely populated villages with their closely knit communities were virtually impossible for the outsiders to penetrate, even under the communist regime. It was the Galician village that defied Stalinist attempts at collectivisation. The part of Poland that was taken by Russia, the Congress of Poland (from the Congress of Vienna in 1815), was in many ways a spearhead of Russian industrialisation, while at the same time sharing in the Russian political backwardness. After the subsequent uprisings the region lost its economic advantage as well as its meagre political distinctiveness from the rest of the Russian Empire.

How do those differences in historical traditions influence the electoral behaviour of post-communist Poland? In the research presented below, data come from the level of municipalities. Making municipalities the basic units of territorial inquiry may solve the problem of shifting administrative and political boundaries in East Central Europe. Fur-

ther, it makes it possible to trace on the maps of electoral behaviour in recent years the effects of some long since disappeared historical boundaries.

Figure 1 and Table 1 show the territorial differentiation of the turnout in the Polish parliamentary elections of 1991. The national turnout was relatively low (43.2%), one of the reasons being a fairly complicated voting procedure. Nevertheless, the historical boundaries come out quite clearly. Two sets of such boundaries seem of particular importance. The first are the borders of the Partitions. The second are the western boundaries of the Polish Second Republic (1919-1939). The effect of both sets of boundaries on electoral behaviour will be discussed in turn.

Table 1. Electoral turnout in the 1991 Polish parliamentary elections  
(Former names of the regions in brackets).

Region	Mean turn-out in 1991
1 Central (Congress Poland)	36.1
2 Wielkopolska (Galicja)	46.7
3 North-East (East Prussia)	34.7
4 Wielkopolska (Duchy of Poznań)	43.6
5 Gdańsk & Pomorze	43.1

A similar phenomenon of a lower electoral turnout in the resettled parts of Bohemia was discernible in the last Czechoslovak parliamentary elections of 1992 (...)

The map of electoral turnout in 1991 recreates the Partition boundaries with remarkable precision. The differences in the political cultures of the three empires seem to have “frozen” into the civic makeup of the respective localities for several generations. Under the Habsburgs, Polish Galicja had its own elected parliament and local government. Although the Ukrainian minority and the peasants were heavily discriminated

against, those representative institutions gave the Poles their first training in political participation. The results can be seen more than one hundred years later. Electoral turnout in the former region of Galicja exceeds by 10% the level attained in its immediate neighbourhood to the North, which was under Russian sovereignty (see Table 1).

The boundary separating the former Congress Poland from the former Duchy of Poznań is similarly distinct. What we call today “race relations” were bad in the Duchy of Poznań at the time of Prussian and later German sovereignty over the region. Max Weber, the great supporter of the germanisation of those territories, complained about the negligible results achieved by the policies applied to this effect by German authorities. The Poznań Poles were resurgent nationalists. Paradoxically though, it was the Prussian tradition of “law and order” and the ethics of hard work that were to make the region distinct later on. It provided the administrative class and economic managers for the reconstruction of the Second Polish Republic (1919-1939), as it more or less continues to do today. The strip leading from Gdańsk to Poznań is marked by a higher electoral turnout than the surrounding areas. Further west, however, as well as in the north-east (the former East Prussia), some contrasting patterns appear. To understand those contrasts, we must go back to the more recent history.

#### **The consequences of mass resettlements**

At the Potsdam Conference in 1945, the Allies conferred the territories east of the rivers Oder and Nissen to Poland as compensation for her eastern lands already taken over by Stalin. As a result, Poland was bodily moved some 300 km to the West. Some 5 million Germans left the territories acquired by Poland, either escaping ahead the Red Army or being deported by the new Polish authorities. The former East Prussia, Pommerania, East Brandenburg and Lower Silesia became resettled by the Polish population from those parts of the Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania, which went under the Soviet jurisdiction. Thus the part of contemporary Poland under former German sovereignty from the time of the Partitions consists of two types of territories: (a) those which belonged to the Second Polish Republic, as the provinces of Pomorze, Wielkopolska and the eastern part of Śląsk, and (b) those which only became part of Poland after W.W. II.

The levels of electoral turnout contrast quite clearly across both sets of boundaries. The civic make-up in the territories acquired after W.W. II seems rather weak, as indicated by a low electoral turnout (37% on average). It would be difficult to explain this in any other way than by the mass resettlements which had affected those territories nearly 50 years earlier. In the southern parts of Śląsk and the Gdańsk region, where many indigenous communities (for example Silesians and Kashubs) largely managed to avoid resettlement, the electoral turnout is in fact higher than in the areas where it was more comprehensive.<sup>2</sup>

The former East Prussia is perhaps the best illustration of the contemporary consequences of the post-war resettlements. The region was almost completely resettled, giving the subsequent communist governments the widest space for their “modernising” agenda. The collectivisation of agriculture that failed in the rest of the country was relatively “successful” in this area, if the number of state farms is considered. Similarly, the “great

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<sup>2</sup>) More detailed research on the relationship between the size of resettlements and electoral behaviour are at the stage of data collection.

building sites of socialism” proliferated here, bringing in masses of migrant workers who settled in the new housing estates, but have never integrated with local communities. As a result of such “social engineering”, those territories are lagging behind in the economic transition, studded as they are with the municipalities built around one factory which now finds itself in a state of decline in the new market economy conditions. The concentration of such municipalities with “structural problems” in those northern parts of Poland resettled after the war is shown in Figure 2.

### **The new regionalism**

The main challenge in the post-communist transition is coming from environs of “structural poverty” formed in rural areas dominated by economically unviable large state farms or industry. The electoral results showed that these sites might have politically explosive potential as they provide a disproportionate share of votes for all kinds of political extremism. There is little local activism in such precincts, both inhabitants and their elected councils looking to the centre for help. The poverty of such areas cannot be cured by means of self-government since participation is low due to the lack of communal bonds among the inhabitants.

On the other hand, it is becoming quite clear that the centrally directed economic transition has its limits. Capitalism is a grass-roots phenomenon which can be encouraged by macroeconomic policy, but only up to a point. The role of local government in both stimulating economic growth and providing protection against its side-effects has been increasing in Poland. This in turn may lead to the widening of territorial inequalities rather than their alleviation. One remedy might be a diffusion of local initiatives over wider areas in the form of regional mobilisation. The current debate in Poland on the role of intermediary territorial units has been paralleled by the emergence of regional move-

ments which started as cultural and social organisations and have become increasingly political.

Regional associations have taken various forms, beginning with co-operation between the present small provinces initiated by the (state appointed) voivodes, to voluntary associations of local governments for economic and cultural purposes, albeit with a distinct political flavour. Such associations have been organised by mayors of historic regional centres and cover more or less the territory of the old provinces that had been subdivided in 1975. There is also a vigorous regional association of Vistulan Pomerania (Pomorze Nadwiślańskie), a new region with the centre in Gdańsk. Its engine is the ethnic minority of the Kashubs, the descendants of a Baltic tribe decimated in the Middle Ages by the Teutonic Knights. Attempts to organise regional movements in other parts of Poland have so far failed, one of the reasons being a dramatic change of Polish territory after the war. A good example is Wrocław, a natural centre of the Lower Silesia region which failed conspicuously to integrate the surrounding provinces.

The territorial diffusion of local initiatives has its limits though. The old boundaries still linger in people's minds, as can be seen in Figure 3. It shows the membership of the Association of Wielkopolska Municipalities that covers more or less the territory of the former Duchy of Poznań, which at present consists of several administrative provinces. Figure 3 also shows a more scattered pattern of another association of municipalities, the Western Union, created in the territories acquired by Poland after the Second World War. It should be mentioned that neither the Wielkopolska Association nor the Western Union made geographic restrictions for their membership. In fact, Wielkopolska Association made considerable inroads in the recruitment of municipalities beyond its historic border to the East, that is, in the territories of little indigenous regional activity. It was less popular, however, among municipalities in the immediate neighbourhood to the West, where the sense of regional identity seems more complicated.

## Conclusions

Ethnic conflicts have been most frequently cited as the major source of centrifugal forces in East-Central Europe. In fact, the region has been notorious as a "belt of mixed populations" and, as such, considered the least suited for the development of unitary nation states. Territorial tensions, however, may originate from a variety of other sources. For the democratic transition also means a greater diversification – political, economic and cultural – across the territories and within the nations that for decades had been kept under tight control. Such diversification has been fuelled by many factors, from the very mechanics of the disintegrating regimes to the nature of the democratic and market reforms already underway.

In this context, Poland is a particularly good example; after the last war, the country became fairly homogeneous, at least as far as ethnicity is concerned. Nevertheless, the territorial differentiation of voting behaviour shows the persistence of certain boundaries that have long disappeared from political and administrative maps. Rokkan's concept of the "freezing" of a civic make-up that had been formed in the early periods of democratic revolutions seems a good explanation for this phenomenon.

The question remains open as to how such patterns of civic behaviour are being transmitted through the generations, especially in a country with such a turbulent history as Poland. The reason we do not know the exact answer to this question is because there is not enough research on the subject. Family and community traditions may provide the first set of hypotheses to explain such transmission. The issue requires separate studies, and perhaps can be better handled by the methods of social psychology than those of political science.

There is another problem, however, illustrated by the maps of electoral behaviour in Poland, that requires further research. It concerns the consequences of "social engineering" in the form of the mass resettlements that followed the change of borders after World War II. Such resettlements were not unique for Poland and their social, political and economic consequences need to be studied more comprehensively.

WIESŁAWA SURAŹSKA gained degrees at the Jagiellonian University (Kraków) and Oxford University (UK). She held a research position for 13 years at the Wrocław Polytechnic in Poland until her emigration. She now teaches at the Institute of Comparative Politics, University of Bergen. Her current research project is "Centre-Periphery Relations in Central Europe". Her most recent articles include "Transition to Democracy and Metropolitan Fragmentation", *The Journal of Political Geography* 15: 365-381, "Municipal budgets in Poland and the Czech Republic in the third year of reform" (with Jiří Blažek of the Charles University in Prague), *Government and Policy (London School of Economics)* 14: 3-23, and "Local Revolutions in Central Europe 1990-1994. Personal memoirs of mayors from the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia". Forthcoming in *Publius, The Journal of Federalism, USA*.

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